



**YOUTH SPEAK - WE LISTEN!**

## **Themes and Sessions:**

During the Forum, participants will be given free reign to explore various themes together that represent integral aspects of peace building and cover various topics of interest to youth such as culture, health, the media, youth participation, community development, the environment, skill formation and information technology amongst others.

### **Theme 1: Understanding Ourselves, Appreciating the Other**

#### **Session 1: The Power of Youth in Promoting Peace**

Investing in youth can be the best means for disseminating peace. Programs, designed to reward behavior that reveals a sense of tolerance, respect for others, and sportsmanship, contribute greatly to propagating a climate of peace. When youth learn to trust, understand and respect others from different ethnic or religious groups, resorting to positive dialogue, they are more likely to commit themselves to building and maintaining peace throughout their life. They are the leaders of tomorrow who will resort to peaceful means, such as dialogue and reconciliation, in defusing tensions and conflict.

#### **Session 2: Is the Media Youth Friendly?**

The media has become an indispensable companion in our lives, and the most powerful tool in influencing public opinion and behavior. The role of television is increasingly replacing other forms of communication with the exception of ICT. From culture to culture, youth-led and youth-watched programs on TV are primarily limited to music and sports programs which have a tremendous influence on their language and behavior patterns. In contrast, other topics of major concern and interest to youth have not yet been sufficiently developed by major broadcasting channels. In addition, programs designed and run by youth that appeal to them are rarely given the chance to be aired during hours where youth are most likely to be watching them. Some of the most effective ways in which young people can help to bring an end to conflict is to encourage them to talk to airwaves, share their ideas and inject their voices in the public discourse. Through the media, they have the opportunity to infuse the art of peace in our cultures, our way of life and influence their own destiny.

### **Theme 2: ICT for Peace**

#### **Session 3: Preserving the Internet as a Safe Place for Us and the Next Generation**

The internet is recognized as one of the most valuable public resources available to humanity in the current age. Navigating in "cyberspace" is a challenging and interesting journey that broadens horizons and unleashes potential. However, this experience is not without risks. Young people and children face threats of abuse and exploitation on line. As the main users of the internet, youth have an intrinsic interest in exploring constructively ways to preserve it as a forum for freedom of expression, while being a safe place for themselves and the next generations. To achieve this goal, a participatory approach involving youth, as well as different stakeholders, is imperative. The session will present international experiences dealing with internet

security and governance. Perspectives from various players will be explored, in an active step towards consensus building. Representatives from youth, international organizations, decision makers, Internet Service providers, the industry, and NGOs will be invited in a free set up to probe into acceptable models that would protect young users from different forms of risks on the net, and maximize its positive usages.

#### **Session 4: Social Entrepreneur for Peace**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are changing the way people, especially young people, think, learn and act. The New technologies have offered youth new instruments to cope with their societies and environments. Politically, the Internet offers a forum for expression that is open to everyone, as well as innovative means for advocacy and conflict resolution. The role of ICT as a facilitating mechanism within various aspects of the conflict cycle and in humanitarian interventions has been recently recognized. Economically, the Internet empowers youth with tools for a more efficient means of living. Culturally, ICT creates platforms, applications for multicultural dialogues that bypass geographical, religious and cultural boundaries. ICT's contribution to society helps shape a better future, with opportunity, prosperity, harmony and peace. The session recognizes that ICTs could be a huge catalyst for Peace, to be led by Youth, change agent & leaders of tomorrow world. Yet, the session acknowledges that ICT is not a "silver Bullet" or a "panacea". Through a debate-style-set up between youth, on the one hand, and decision makers, on the other, the session examines the challenges and opportunities in using ICT to accelerate Prosperity For Peace and form "the Social Entrepreneurs For Peace".

### **Theme 3: Youth Leading Development**

#### **Session 5: Creating Economic Opportunities and Breaking the Cycle of Dependence**

Young people are an enormous untapped reservoir of initiative and entrepreneurship. Youth unemployment leads to exclusion and marginalization and if left unattended may erupt into violent behavior patterns. An option to combat unemployment is enhancing self-employment by providing all the necessary support required such as access to loan, to credit and to market networks. In addition the provision of technical assistance to young entrepreneurs enables them to develop small and medium enterprises.

#### **Session 6: No to Exclusion! Investing in Young Women's Economic Security**

It is well recognized that women employed both in the formal and informal sector contribute substantially to economic development of their communities and countries. When provided with the opportunity to learn and acquire advanced skills, they are increasingly joining the corporate sector. Women's employment contributes substantially to family income and to overall security and stability of the family. Young women should be provided with life long opportunities for skills formation, enabling them to rejoin the labor market. Removing any gender-bias in the investment climate, and maintaining a level playing field will reduce any possible market distortion or malfunctioning. The provision of equal opportunities for both men and women will ultimately lead to higher rates of economic growth and prosperity.

### **Theme 4: Violence or Peace – A Personal Choice?**

#### **Session 7: Connecting Youth with their Communities**

The period of youth and adolescence is characterized by the burst of energy that has to be effectively channeled and used. This is the time when imaginative projects are designed, latent talents are discovered and management and organizational skills are

put to use. Organizing different projects that can utilize the various talents of youth in different areas would be of great value to their communities. In addition, it will develop in them the sense of ownership, pride and fulfillment. Youth internship and apprenticeship programs are examples of avenues that contribute greatly to their identifying the career they wish to pursue. The confidence of youth is greatly enhanced when they called upon to ensure the security in their neighborhood, launch security initiatives with their communities and align themselves with law and order.

### **Session 8: My Future, My Peace**

Youth need opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, not only because they will be the leaders, facilitators and stakeholders of our future but because they can also play a central role in shaping our present. Today, in all parts of the world, young people are playing decisive roles within their families, schools and local communities. They are channeling their energy and imagination into tackling the root causes of violence, rallying behind social and humanitarian causes, and building bridges of tolerance and understanding across ethnic lines and cultural barriers. For all these reasons, it is imperative that they be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs that impact their lives.

The creation of student councils, youth parliaments and networks is an effective means of helping youth to voice and integrate their ideas into national policies. It is also a means of encouraging more young people to appreciate their potential as change-makers. Civic responsibilities, once formed, tend to be durable and expand into the broader community later on.

## **Theme 5: Living at Peace with Myself and the Environment**

### **Session 9: Spreading the Health, Generating real Wealth**

Youth is a transition, when young people move from childhood to adulthood. During this critical period of development, young people are highly vulnerable to the influences around them. Some of these influences may be positive; others can be extremely detrimental to both their physical and emotional wellness. Popular culture has always glamorized the idea of “living fast and dying young”, sophisticated smokers, brave street-fighters and care free drug users. It has painted a fictitious image of beauty in all our minds, inerasable, which dictates that our level of success will depend on the size of our waistline. How can we reverse these fraudulent perceptions? How can we help future generations to embrace the idea of “living healthy, living life to the fullest”?

For starters, the youth of today can become the role models of tomorrow. They can help to build people’s self-esteem and self-confidence, empowering them to resist negative stimulus. They can help to educate others on the harms of substance abuse and enhance their ability to reject violence, engaging them instead in activities that promote richness of life.

### **Session 10: Young Minds Enriching the Environment**

We live in times where the fabric of our environment is unraveling before our eyes. Climate change, biodiversity loss, Ozone depletion, deforestation and the continuing problems of soil erosion and water availability have become a major threat to the interface between humans and the environment systems on which we all depend. Young people have an enormous stake in changing these trends in order to be able to have a better future. They can help to focus the efforts of the international community

towards more cohesive strategies vis-à-vis the environment. They can mobilize public opinion in favor of eco-friendly policies and practices. In addition, they have the potential to find innovative strategies to minimize the negative impact of economic development on the environment and preserve our natural resources.

**Session 11: Sports: a Means for Instilling Positive Behavior**

Sports and physical education are invaluable in building in young people positive character traits such as team building, physical and moral traits and sportsmanship. They are the most effective means of channeling energy and curbing aggressive behavior. For children and youth when emotions are strong, they enhance positive mood, enhance discipline and cultivate leadership. Sport is a uniting force; as it is all about participation, self esteem, and a sense of belonging. It helps in managing situations such as victory or defeat.